Digital Transformation Tools for Education Services in Our Changing World

Summary: The spread of coronavirus forced the closure of educational institutions in March 2020. Regardless of how long the effects of this pandemic stay, schools and colleges have realised the need for custom applications to stay connected to their students. Their teachers can also use such connectivity solutions to collaborate with parents in times when direct human interaction is not advisable.

In his book ‘Future Shock’ published in the 1970s, Alvin Toffler envisaged a transforming world that would be propelled into newer trajectories not merely by technology but also by changing political realities, social orders, aspirations and lifestyles. However, even Alvin had not imagined that the world could face a drastic metamorphosis because of a virus.

With the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19, government bodies in many countries closed numerous organisations, including public and private educational institutions. In India, even as the unlocking phase began with the reopening of businesses under strict conditions, schools and colleges had to remain shut to prevent the contagion from affecting children.

Amidst such challenges, the only way to ensure that students do not get left behind on their curriculum was to build an engaging distance learning environment for them. The right mix of technologies for the education industry is exceptionally crucial.

Tata Tele Business Services (TTBS) devised its digital learning package for the education sector with such long-term needs in mind. Here’s how they are helping our clients:

Webcasting service

One of the key products in TTBS’ digital collaboration tools is the webcasting service that allows schools to build virtual classrooms. The platform accommodates up to 5000 participants. Therefore, even though the average size of a class is between 30 and 50 students, schools can leverage their webcasting service to address larger groups. The facility helps when one or more wings of the institution have to assemble for important announcements.

Schools need not download the application to create a virtual classroom. The webcasting service is a browser-based cloud tool that can be used on any desktop, tablet or smartphone connected to the Internet. Students sign on to the audio-video conferencing, and teachers take classes just as they would in the physical classroom. By activating their webcams, all participants can show their presence to others.

With several versatile features, teachers can make their presentations on webcasting platform enriching and impactful for their students. They also have chat, survey and testing services to keep the session interactive and check how attentive the class has been.

Students can download copies of their assignments and may request the teachers for audio/video recordings or PPT content for references.

The webcasting-based virtual classrooms can have as much cybersecurity as the school desires. It comes with password protection, referral checking, email and IP authorisation/blocking.
Audio and Web Conferencing

Another collaboration solution that schools, coaching institutes and hobby class groups can use for more personalised online interactions is the Audio and Web Conferencing app. It is a feature-rich solution that delivers an enterprise-grade service to groups for wholesome collaboration experience. Participants can use any device, from anywhere, at anytime for one-click access to their intuitive virtual meeting rooms.

Besides educational institutions, the sudden outbreak of COVID-19 had also disrupted numerous classes for personal interests such as yoga, meditation, cooking, beauty care, and dress designing, among others. With the TTBS Audio and Web Conferencing solution, the members of such hobby groups can continue to connect with their instructors and batchmates from the safety of their homes. With the ease of content sharing, simple-to-use meeting controls, unlimited audio dial-in access, and features to personalise meeting rooms, the feel of being in these virtual classes becomes as intuitive as face-to-face interactions.

Our Audio and Web Conferencing app comes with comprehensive admin control, which enables participants to get reports and recordings from the meeting in case they miss something or wish to review what was taught in the day. It is cost-effective and also allows international telephonic communication with premium audio quality.

Online fee depositing services

Many educational institutions were soliciting payments via cash, cheque or demand drafts before the COVID-19 lockdown. They did not have secure payment gateways on their websites to accept fees online. The usage of public e-wallets meant giving away precious bank data to a third party.

With its fee collection tool, TTBS removed this hurdle. The TCS iON Fee Collector offers educational service providers a safe way to receive fees from their students and clients.

The software application has a configurable environment for organisation-authorised administrators to manage the fee collection effortlessly. They can create student/client profiles, generate and map the fee schedules, and track the due fee. The platform has a simplified interface to which payees can log in to check the fee amount and make timely payments. There is an option for admin to upload cash payments against a student, so records are up to date.

TCS iON Fee Collector allows for multiple payment gateway integrations and real-time synchronisation of transactions for optimal fee management. The fee is deposited instantly into the institution’s bank account, and actionable reports are generated to list the payees' names and deposited amounts. This brings significant time and cost savings for the organisation. It also saves payees from the trouble (and risks) of visiting banks or campus for fee deposits.

The secure login and role-based access control with this fee collection system make it a valuable tool for the digitally transforming education industry.

Vehicle tracking solution

Would schools and colleges still need vehicle tracking solutions if the students have been attending classes from home? The significance of GPS trackers cannot be undermined, and, in fact, has increased now. They are helping manufacturers and e-commerce retailers to transport their products under supervision.

Sooner or later, when the schools reopen for regular or hybrid classes, they will need bus tracking systems for real-time-location information of their vehicles. Authorities can be aware of the whereabouts
of students and staff using the bus service at all times. They can also ensure that the buses avoid containment zones. Parents get to monitor the bus location and ensure that they reach the bus stop in time to escort younger children home.

Email Security

Email is the lifeline of any organisation, including educational institutes. Like corporate offices, several educational institutes today provide official email IDs with school domain names to their students and teachers. However, this practice exposes them to new vulnerabilities in the cyberspace.

As per research, email is the #1 threat vector for any entity using digital tools. There have been instances where hackers impersonated school authorities and sought advance fee or sensitive information from students.

TTBS designed its E-mail Security solution to counter such issues. Whether an educational institute uses Microsoft’s Outlook or Google Suite or any on-premise hosted solution, the CISCO-powered email security offered by TTBS makes emails safe for their users. Through an added layer, academic IT administrators can set rules on email content to ward off racial discrimination, political propaganda, hate speech, violence incitement and/or vulgarity. The deep packet inspection feature of this tool can inspect every email and all attachments to deliver safe communication to all students, teachers and stakeholders.

Final word

The pace at which schools are adopting digitalisation exemplifies that a lot will change in the education sector through the months and years to come. What’s certain is that we will not go back to the ‘pre-COVID’ era. That is already left behind.

As educational institutions start digitalising their methods of content delivery and examination patterns, they have to choose the right products and services that best serve the needs of their students, teachers and stakeholders. From intuitive webinar systems and web conferencing apps to secure online modes for fee payment and vehicle tracking tools, they can adopt from a range of tools tailored to make the education industry future-ready.

Instead of letting the current crisis make the future shocking for us, let us build shock-absorbers that help us to reach sustainable tomorrows!

To know more about TTBS’ digital tools for the education industry, call us at 1800-266-1800.